



May 14, 2013

Hon. Edmund G. Brown, Jr.  
Governor  
State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: ELEMENTS OF A DELTA SOLUTION

Governor Brown,

We are writing to thank you for your Administration's recent response to some members of Congress who expressed concerns about the State Water Resources Control Board's (SWRCB) update of the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan, and to urge you to actively support timely completion of this effort and related actions as part of the development and implementation of a comprehensive solution to the ecosystem restoration and water supply reliability problems of the Bay-Delta.

In their April 30 letter, Resources Secretary Laird, SWRCB Chair Marcus, and Delta Stewardship Council Chair Isenberg emphasized that the Board's update is "necessary to achieve the Delta Reform Act's co-equal goals of a more reliable water supply for California and protecting, restoring and enhancing the Delta ecosystem," as well as a prerequisite to permitting future changes in diversion. They also observed "improved irrigation efficiencies, water transfers, conjunctive use, and other responses to reduced supplies are likely to substantially reduce the extent of any impact."

These statements underline the critical reality that stronger flow and water quality protections; more efficient conservation and management of existing water supplies; and improvements to the physical habitat and conveyance infrastructure in the current Delta, go hand in hand. There is an overwhelming scientific consensus that the ongoing, large-scale diversions of water from the

Bay-Delta watershed have substantially reduced and altered freshwater flows, and are among the most important causes of native species declines and general ecosystem collapse. There is a growing understanding that innovative approaches to water use efficiency and storage could save millions of acre-feet of water for use in cities, industry and agriculture. There is widespread agreement that the current physical Delta is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and catastrophic events and that the virtual disappearance of the Delta's wetlands, floodplains and riparian habitats can and should be reversed.

In our view, a comprehensive Delta solution must encompass the following three elements:

- Strong, new flow and water quality requirements adopted and enforced by the SWRCB that are significantly more protective than existing requirements and are sufficient to meet the state's mandate to double populations of salmon and other migratory fishes, support viable, self-sustaining populations of a broad range of native aquatic species, and provide sustainable river and estuary habitat conditions for a healthy, functional Bay-Delta ecosystem.
- Aggressive and ambitious actions within areas exporting water from the Delta or diverting from its watershed to reduce reliance on the fragile Delta ecosystem as a water supply source and to promote local self-reliance through conservation, recycling, alternative supplies, and other means, as required by state law; and,
- Physical changes within the existing Delta to avoid disruption of the water supply system by catastrophic events and to restore large-scale blocs of habitat that can support a healthy Delta ecosystem, including conveyance and habitat improvements such as those being considered in the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) process.

Each of these elements is necessary to a comprehensive water supply reliability and ecosystem restoration solution; none is sufficient in and of itself. As Governor, you have spoken forcefully and clearly about the need for physical changes to the Delta, and promoted BDCP as a way to accomplish those changes. In addition to BDCP, we believe that the time has come for you to be equally clear and forceful about the need for major improvements in vital ecosystem flows and for a plan to help enhance water supply reliability through conservation, recycling, enhanced storage south of the Delta, and other alternative supplies.

While your Administration is currently taking actions related to flow protection and water use efficiency, these actions lack the urgency and ambition of your approach to BDCP. We believe you should commit your Administration to complete an update of the Bay-Delta flow and water quality standards within two years that is explicitly intended to meet the thresholds of salmonid doubling, native species population viability, and functional ecosystem habitat. Further, we believe you should commit your Administration to articulate and begin implementing within two years a comprehensive plan of incentives and disincentives that aggressively promote local water supply self-reliance, in order to decrease the pressure on the fragile Delta ecosystem and ensure compliance with the Delta Reform Act's mandate to reduce export water supply reliance on the Delta. Securing adequate ecosystem flows and ensuring that water is used more efficiently in

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areas that now rely on the Delta watershed are essential elements to reaching agreement on a comprehensive Delta solution that includes changes to Delta conveyance and habitat.

Our organizations have been working collaboratively and constructively for many years to help design and implement a comprehensive Delta solution. Our ability to support any proposed solution is directly premised on the satisfactory inclusion of all the solution elements we have identified. We urge you to direct your Administration to act quickly and decisively to make progress on major ecosystem flow protections and water efficiency improvements in order to implement the comprehensive solution so desperately needed. We are ready and willing to work with you toward securing that comprehensive solution.

Sincerely,



Gary Bobker  
The Bay Institute



John Cain  
American Rivers



Kim Delfino  
Defenders of Wildlife



Leo Winternitz  
The Nature Conservancy



Katherine Poole  
Natural Resources Defense Council